

# Internships



A Guide to Internships in Maine State Government

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*This document was created in part with information and excerpts from “Designing and Implementing an Internship Program” from the University of Southern Maine’s Career & Employment Hub.*

## INTRODUCTION TO INTERNSHIPS

The dream . . . hire experienced new employees who already have the knowledge and skills to “hit the ground running.” But this dream conflicts with reality. How can organizations meet the needs of today and prepare the workforce of the future? One solution is to develop a quality internship program within your agency. This reference guide will assist you with the options available for hiring an intern.

### WHAT IS AN INTERNSHIP?

An internship is a professional learning experience that offers meaningful, practical, project-based work related to a student’s field of study or career interest. Internships offer students the opportunity for career exploration, professional development, and skill building. It offers the employer the opportunity to bring new ideas and energy into the workplace, develop talent, and build a pipeline for potential full-time employees. Although internships can vary widely from agency to agency, some common characteristics include the following in Maine State Government. An internship:



- Is a time-limited experience that usually lasts about 3 to 6 months.
- Is generally a one-time experience.
- May be part-time or full-time.
- May be part of an educational program and carefully monitored and evaluated for academic credit (needs to be established between the intern and the educational institution).
- May be part of a learning plan that someone develops individually.
- Is different from a short-term job or volunteer work and has an intentional “learning agenda” in a structured work environment.
- Includes learning objectives, observation, reflection, evaluation and assessment.
- Has an existing employee working in the department/position to mentor and supervise the intern.
- Seeks to establish a reasonable balance between the intern’s learning goals and the specific work tasks of an organization.
- Promotes academic, career and/or personal development.

### HOW DO INTERNSHIPS BENEFIT THE AGENCY AND THE INTERNS?

Employers benefit from interns in many ways. While the employer is involved in the on-going training and mentoring of interns, the benefits are many and are listed below:

- A year-round source of highly motivated pre-professionals.
- The opportunity to have new perspectives on various processes, procedures and programs.
- Quality candidates for special projects.
- The increased visibility of your organization on college campuses.
- Prepared and trained people for future applicant pools for state employment.
- A proven, cost-effective way to recruit and evaluate potential employees.
- Increase the possibility of people staying in Maine.

In addition to agency benefits, interns themselves benefit from the programs in the following ways:

- Interns build their resumes and increase their knowledge, experience and skills.
- Interns can work on meaningful projects within state government.
- Interns gain exposure to state government and working in the public sector.
- Interns can network and develop both personally and professionally.



Keep in mind that interns are not meant to replace, diminish, or in any way interfere with any current state agency effort or program. They are, instead, a partial response to the need for a succession strategy in state government. Since many state employees will or could leave state government within the next few years, a loss of talent with the attendant skills and knowledge threatens the ability of state government to continue the delivery of the quality and quantity of service that customers deserve. The intern process is intended (at least in part) to increase and prepare a potential pool of talent to meet our anticipated need for qualified employees. Based on this introductory experience, some will choose to work within state government. Others will gain experience and build their resume but choose another career.

## CREATING AN INTERNSHIP PROGRAM

Being thoughtful and intentional as you design your internship opportunity will result in a more successful and satisfying experience for all involved. We suggested working with your HR department on internship best practices as you are building and conceptualizing your opportunity.

### DESIGNING AN INTERNSHIP PROGRAM THAT MEETS YOUR NEEDS

Agencies vary in size and scope of work, so there is no one-size-fits-all approach to creating and maintaining an internship program. This what makes internships special: no two programs are the same. Therefore, it's important to know what will make your agency's internship program authentic and unique. To find out what kind of program will work best for you, you must conduct an internal needs assessment and goal setting. Start by asking the following questions:

- 1) **Why does the organization want to create an internship program?** An internship program can be part of a talent recruitment strategy and an opportunity to participate in the development of students. It's important to understand your agency's reason for creating an internship program.
- 2) **What are the goals and outcomes of the internship?** Is there a conversion rate from intern to employee your agency hopes to accomplish over several years? Understanding how an intern contributes to the goals and outcomes of the agency will add to the overall mission of the program.

## DISCUSS AND PLAN THE LOGISTICS

Internship programs become a part of an agency's culture. They are often a key recruitment strategy for talent. As a result, it is important to develop an internship program that clearly explains agency goals and the role and responsibilities of the intern. Spend time structuring your program.

- **Agency intern committee:** Each agency or bureau should have an intern committee to assist in being the point of contact for all agency projects, selection and new employee integration requirements, and promoting the program within the agency.
- **Candidate qualifications:** Selecting an intern is much like selecting a permanent employee; you are looking for the person with the skills and talents that match what you need. Because this will be a limited duration relationship, it is important that you carefully define what you are looking for in an intern so that you can recognize it when it is presented to you. You should also decide ahead of time if you are willing to negotiate on job duties, salary/stipends, etc.
- **Learning agreement:** Each agency should create a project-specific learning agreement/contract (see [Appendix 2](#)) that states what the intern will learn/be exposed to; and, noting the agency expectations of the intern during the internship (i.e. highlights the obligations of both parties built around the expected learning from work on any given project). This agreement will identify the intern mentor who acts as a guide and confidante for agency matters and issues. Important internship considerations include:
  - 1) Project leader/contact person and intern supervisor are identified.
  - 2) Length of project and approximate start/end date.
  - 3) Minimum project-specific knowledge/skills of intern.
  - 4) Expected outcome and learning objectives.
  - 5) Statement as to the growth benefits for the intern (note: some projects may involve more than one intern and sometimes with a mix of state employees).
  - 6) Identified project metrics so success is more easily measured. Also, the intern may be required by their educator to prepare a written work related to the experience and submit it to a faculty advisor.
  - 7) You should not guarantee a job upon completion of the internship or graduation.
- **Intern selection:** All interns should be matched through a competitive interview process to a specific meaningful project or set of projects that will contribute to intern growth while assisting the agency in better serving customers; these projects must be developed and managed by state agencies and should not extend beyond six (6) months. [Appendix 1](#) contains a form to assist you in outlining your project. Intern selection should be like any other hiring process; that is, there should be an interview, a resume should be provided, and the intern-project match should establish desired project-specific goals.
- **Intern growth and continued development:** Beyond the predetermined project or set of projects, agencies can foster intern growth and development by encouraging their involvement in other appropriate agency work (i.e. attending a staff meeting, taking a field trip, reviewing a proposal prior to becoming policy, etc.) and having formal intern-intern or intern-staff interactions such as lunch learning sessions or socializing, both of which would broaden the intern experience. Interns also benefit from exposure across the organization- for example, the intern could job shadow in another area of the department for a day.



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## ONBOARDING AND NEXT STEPS

- **Agency preparation:** All participating agencies should be prepared for an intern's first day with a formal welcoming (including a tour of their office space), work station readiness (space, computer, phone, internet access, etc.), project contact person and mentor available for a briefing. Include HR to ensure any "new hire" requirements are completed and be sure to introduce the intern to appropriate upper manager(s). Making your intern comfortable in the office is invaluable. Additionally, confirm the intern's interests early on. Internships should be a refinement process, with room to adjust tasks and priorities as needed.
- **Intern and agency feedback:** Interns need formal and periodic feedback on progress made/agency appreciation for the work being done just as the agency needs to monitor each internship to at least be aware of a problem early enough to resolve it (e.g. coaching, offering assistance, providing some training, etc.). For some students, an internship may be their first experience in a professional environment. A supervisor can offer structure that is invaluable to their experience.
- **Program monitoring and evaluation:** Each agency involved in the internship should monitor the program so real time adjustments (better assuring a successful intern experience) can be made while evaluating the long-term effects on the agency, agency personnel, and agency productivity. Tracking data indicating that a percentage of interns came into state government or had other successful outcomes could also assist in future intern recruitment. Intern supervisors can also follow up with interns after their experience, to keep in touch and keep the intern engaged.
- **Intern presentations:** It is highly suggested that each successful internship end with a short presentation to upper management, a Commissioner, or even the Governor at which the intern explains the project, how the intern approached it, and the results; this effort will raise the profile and prestige of the program and add to the learning experience for each intern.
- **Special arrangements:** There might be certain situations consistent with ADA and other legal requirements where some of the intern work might be done from a remote location or on-site with reasonable accommodation.

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## INTERN ORIENTATION

### **Orienting Interns into Your Organization**

Develop a thorough orientation and training plan to be implemented when the interns begin work. Research shows that employers who take adequate time at the beginning of the internship to orient the student reap productivity and effectiveness more quickly than those who don't. Invest supervisory time to establish an important bond with interns and set a crucial tone for the internship experience.

#### **Prior to the First Day:**

- Set up an organized work area for the intern.
- Set up phone, voicemail, computer, email, and internet access and/or other resources necessary for them to accomplish the tasks you have stipulated in the internship position description.
- Outline work expectations for the duration of the internship.
- Prepare forms to be signed, including a confidentiality agreement, if necessary.



#### **Explain the Mission of the Agency:**

- What is the history of the agency and its mission?

- What is unique about your service?
- Who benefits from your service? What are agency's current objectives?
- How may the intern contribute to those objectives?

#### **Explain the Agency Structure:**

- Who reports to whom?
- Who is the intern's direct report?
- What is the intern's department responsible for? How are decisions made?
- Which personnel can answer different kinds of questions?

#### **Outline Agency Rules, Policies, Decorum, and Expectations:**

- Is there special industry jargon and abbreviations? How does the intern learn them?
- What are the specific work standards and procedures?
- How should they process requests?
- How do the communication systems work? What are the approved forms for correspondence? By what safety regulations must they abide?
- Is there a procedure for signing off completed work?
- What periodic forms or reports need to be completed?
- What local, state, and/or federal guidelines or laws apply to their work? Are there security or confidentiality issues? What is acceptable in dress and appearance?

#### **Monitor the Intern's Adjustment and Understanding of What is Expected:**

- Make yourself visibly available to the intern.
- Encourage non-supervisory staff to casually check-in with the intern.
- Include the intern in the work environment: meetings, lunches, etc.
- Offer accolades for good work and feedback for areas needing growth.
- Encourage the intern to ask questions!



#### **General Tips:**

- **Start recruiting early:** recruiting interns is like recruiting a full-time employee. You will want to make sure your internship announcement is visible to the public and that you start planning your recruitment early, in the event you would like to conduct interviews of your interns.
- **Use your resources:** Make sure to reach out to college advisors, deans and instructors to advertise your internship. The Bureau of Human Resources has an internship page on their website; contact the Talent Management Division to have your internship placed on their website.
- **Treat potential interns like potential employees:** Interns could become permanent employees one day, so it's important to treat them (and vet them) as though they are an employee.

## **RECRUIT, RECRUIT, RECRUIT!**

### **HOW DO I RECRUIT FOR INTERNS?**

The intern candidates could include college and university students (graduate and undergraduate), junior/community college students, retired or ex-military personnel (including transitioning service members) and trade school students/graduates. Once you have structured your program and received approval to hire an intern, please contact BHR to advertise your internship on their website.

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## TYPES OF INTERNS

### ACADEMIC INTERNS

Academic Interns should be matched (after screening by the academic institution prior to application submission to this program) to projects based on their skills and knowledge and the requirements of the project; some of the matching intern criteria could include:

- 1) GPA (Grade Point Average)
- 2) Degree program
- 3) Credits already earned
- 4) Specific courses already taken
- 5) Instructor recommendation or standard “hiring equivalent” recommendations
- 6) Relevant personal attributes such as initiative, communications, creative, interpersonal skills
- 7) Interest in interning on this project

### MILITARY, TRADE SCHOOL, OR INTERNS NOT ASSOCIATED WITH ACADEMIA

Military requirements and trade school students/graduates or, Interns not associated with academia, could include:

- 1) Life experience
- 2) Technical training
- 3) Field of expertise
- 4) Standard “hiring equivalent” recommendations
- 5) To be eligible for the State of Maine Project Internship Program veterans must have a discharge other than dishonorable.**
- 6) Appropriate skills and knowledge as it relates to the project(s)
- 7) Relevant personal attributes
- 8) Interest in interning on project(s)

### MAINE STATE GOVERNMENT INTERNSHIP PROGRAM (MARGARET CHASE SMITH POLICY CENTER)

Collaborative process between the Office of the Governor, the Bureau of Human Resources, numerous Maine state government agencies and the Margaret Chase Smith Policy Center. Typically, the program is announced in January of each year. The announcement includes explanation of the process, forms required and timeline/deadlines for participating State agencies. The Margaret Chase Smith Policy Center receives candidate applications, interviews and selects the person for the designated and approved internship position within the agency making the request. Additional information is available on their website:

<https://mcspolicycenter.umaine.edu/for-students/maine-government-summer-internship-program/> or you may contact the Bureau of Human Resources at 207-624-7761.

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## ESTABLISHING AND FUNDING INTERNSHIPS

**Student and General Interns:** Established as “project” or “permanent” positions. The Student Intern and General Intern classifications were set up to allow agencies to establish permanent positions. These are “head count” positions with funding approved through the typical legislative process. In these cases, employees are placed in the positions as “acting capacity.” “Project Intern” positions need to be re-established each time there is a need identified for such a position. Unlike a “permanent” intern position, financial orders are required. It is important to work with your Service Centers to ensure proper accounting



for the positions. Interns provide paraprofessional work in any variety of professional or technical fields and provide support work to agencies within State government. Work is performed under immediate supervision.

- **Student Intern** (see [Appendix 3](#)): Defined as a student currently enrolled **AND** who has completed the first half of a formal post-secondary educational or technical training program in the field associated with the particular position. Positions in this classification apply knowledge and skills developed in an academic environment to the actual workplace in order to gain exposure to the work environment and learn various aspects of the field on-the-job. Agencies with the need for an intern are responsible for all new hire integration (including advertising, interviewing and hiring decision).
- **General Intern** (see [Appendix 4](#)): Defined as a person who has completed a certified apprentice program, military training or other formal post-secondary educational program in the field associated with the particular position. Positions in this classification apply knowledge and skills developed in a military, vocational, or other formal training environment to the actual workplace in order to gain exposure to the work environment and learn various aspects of the field on-the-job. Agencies with the need for an intern are responsible for all new hire integration (including advertising, interviewing and hiring decision).

**Contract Intern:** A contracted intern could be currently enrolled as a student in a post-secondary educational program in the field associated with the particular position; or have completed a certified apprentice program, military training, or other formal post-secondary educational program in the field associated with the particular position. A Financial Order is NOT required to fund a contract position. Funding can be from any funding source the Agency has available (including private funding sources not associated with Maine State Government). However, agency personnel must meet the Division of Purchases policies and procedures.

Contracting with an individual to fill an internship in State Government is considered a “purchase” and requires coordination with the Division of Procurement Services. More information can be found on Procurement’s website: <https://www.maine.gov/dafs/bbm/procurementservices/home>

**Please Note: There may be grants available to pay your intern. Check with professional associations and private foundations.**

# APPENDIX 1- AGENCY CONTACT INFORMATION FORM

 [Return to Project Specific Emphasis](#)

## State of Maine Project Internship Agency/Contact Information and Project Outline

Department: \_\_\_\_\_ Division/Unit: \_\_\_\_\_

Location: \_\_\_\_\_ Physical Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Length of Project: \_\_\_\_\_ Start Date: \_\_\_\_\_ End Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
(max 24 weeks/ 6 months)

1  2  3  more than 3  (enter number) \_\_\_\_\_

Number of Interns Needed: \_\_\_\_\_

Project Leader (name, title): \_\_\_\_\_

Project Leader Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Mentor (name/title): \_\_\_\_\_  
(if different from Project Leader)

Mentor Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

## Project Details

**Project Title:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Project Description:** *Describe the overall project details.*

**Knowledge/ skills required for project:** *Describe the basic knowledge and skills an intern would be expected to have in order to successfully complete the internship project.*

**Project Goals:** *Describe the anticipated goals or outcome of the project. ( Be as specific as possible using measurable goals.)*

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**Role of Intern:** *Describe intern's responsibilities on project.*

**Anticipated Intern Outcomes:** *Describe the benefits the intern will gain from this learning experience.*

**Project Completion:** *Describe any expected reports, presentation or other opportunities for the intern to share the experience and what they learned.*

## Agency Approval

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Name of Department

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Approval Date

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Authorized Signature

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Printed Name and Title

# APPENDIX 2-INTERNSHIP LEARNING AGREEMENT

[Return to Learning Agreement](#)

## State of Maine Project Internship Learning Agreement Contact Information

Department:			Unit:	
Location:		Physical Address:		
Project Leader (name, title):				
Project Leader Phone:			Email:	
Mentor-Name Title: (if different from Project Leader)				
Mentor Phone:			Email:	
Intern Name:				
Intern Phone:			Email:	
Intern Address:				

### Project Duration Detail

Start Date		End Date	
Total Hours		Hours/week	
Wages (\$ per Hour)			

This AGREEMENT, made this \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_ is by and between the State of Maine, hereinafter called "Department," and \_\_\_\_\_, hereinafter called "Intern."

WHEREAS IT IS AGREED THAT:

The Department will provide the following learning experiences to the Intern: *(Project Proposal description of Anticipated Intern Outcomes)*

The Intern agrees to the following expectations of the Department: *(Project Proposal Role of Intern)*

Project Description & Purpose: *(Describe the project goals and anticipated outcomes)*

INTERN:

DEPARTMENT:

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(Intern Name)

(Name of Department/Agency)

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Intern Signature

Authorized Signature

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Printed Name/Title

## STUDENT INTERN

Miscellaneous	3300
Intern	MIS1005100
Not Elsewhere Classified	Range 01
Worker	0413

**DESCRIPTION:** This is paraprofessional support work in any of a wide variety of professional or technical fields. Positions in this classification apply knowledges and skills developed in an academic environment to the actual workplace in order to gain exposure to the work environment, learn various aspects of the field on-the-job, and provide support work to a state agency. Work is performed under immediate supervision.

**REPRESENTATIVE TASKS:** *(A position may not be assigned all the duties listed, nor do the listed examples include all the duties that may be assigned.)*

- ... Performs increasingly complex administrative and/or technical tasks associated with the field of study in order to provide support to the agency and to learn various aspects of the profession.
- ... Analyzes various situations, organizations, and/or problems and applies learned knowledges in order to develop recommendations designed to increase organizational and/or program efficiency and effectiveness.
- ... Reports on actions taken, analyses performed, and work produced in order to provide user, system, and/or program documentation.

**KNOWLEDGES, SKILLS, AND ABILITIES REQUIRED:** *(These are required to successfully perform the work assigned.)*

- ... Knowledge of the basic principles and practices of the profession associated with the position.
- ... Knowledge of the basic technical aspects of the field of work associated with the position.
- ... Ability to compile and analyze information and develop recommendations.
- ... Ability to follow oral and written instructions.
- ... Ability to communicate effectively orally and in writing.

MINIMUM QUALIFICATIONS: (*Entry level knowledges, skills, and/or abilities may be acquired through, **BUT ARE NOT LIMITED TO** the following coursework/training and/or experience.*)

Must be currently enrolled in and have completed the first half of a formal post-secondary educational program in the field associated with the particular position.

SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS: (*These must be met prior to a student being hired in this classification.*)

A contract or other written agreement between the academic institution, the student, and the employing state agency must be in effect documenting the following:

1. the duration of the internship (not to exceed one (1) academic year);
2. minimum performance standards;
3. performance review guidelines; and
4. academic credit (if any) to be earned.

EXAM PLAN: (*This must be successfully completed by all employees prior to attaining permanent status in this class.*)

Direct Hire.

SPECIAL NOTE:

Positions in this classification are intended to be established as Project positions (non-status) with a duration not to exceed one calendar year. Agencies may establish permanent positions (to eliminate the need to reestablish Project positions each year), but such positions may only be filled on an Acting Capacity (non-status) basis.

## GENERAL INTERN

Miscellaneous	3302
Intern	MIS1005101
Not Elsewhere Classified	Range 01
Worker	0413

**DESCRIPTION:** This is paraprofessional support work in any of a wide variety of professional or technical fields. Positions in this classification apply knowledges and skills developed in a military, vocational, or other formal training environment to the actual workplace in order to gain exposure to the work environment, learn various aspects of the field on-the-job, and provide support work to a state agency. Work is performed under immediate supervision.

**REPRESENTATIVE TASKS:** *(A position may not be assigned all the duties listed, nor do the listed examples include all the duties that may be assigned.)*

- Performs increasingly complex administrative and/or technical tasks associated with the field of study or previous work experience in order to provide support to the agency and to learn various aspects of the profession.
- Analyzes various situations, organizations, and/or problems and applies learned knowledge in order to develop recommendations designed to increase organizational and/or program efficiency and effectiveness.
- Reports on actions taken, analyses performed, and work produced in order to provide user, system, and/or program documentation.

**KNOWLEDGES, SKILLS, AND ABILITIES REQUIRED:** *(These are required to successfully perform the work assigned.)*

- Knowledge of the basic principles and practices of the profession associated with the position.
- Knowledge of the basic technical aspects of the field of work associated with the position.
- Ability to compile and analyze information and develop recommendations.
- Ability to follow oral and written instructions.
- Ability to communicate effectively orally and in writing.

**MINIMUM QUALIFICATIONS:** *(Entry level knowledges, skills, and/or abilities may be acquired through, **BUT ARE NOT LIMITED TO** the following coursework/training and/or experience.)*



Must have completed a certified apprentice program, military training, or other formal post-secondary educational program in the field associated with the particular position.

SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS: *(These must be met prior to a student being hired in this classification.)*

A contract or other written agreement between the student and the employing state agency must be in effect documenting the following:

1. the duration of the internship (not to exceed one (1) year);
2. minimum performance standards;
3. performance review guidelines; and

EXAM PLAN: *(This must be successfully completed by all employees prior to attaining permanent status in this class.)*

Direct Hire.

SPECIAL NOTE:

Positions in this classification are intended to be established as Project positions (non-status) with a duration not to exceed one calendar year. Agencies may establish permanent positions (to eliminate the need to reestablish Project positions each year), but such positions may only be filled on an Acting Capacity (non-status) basis.